

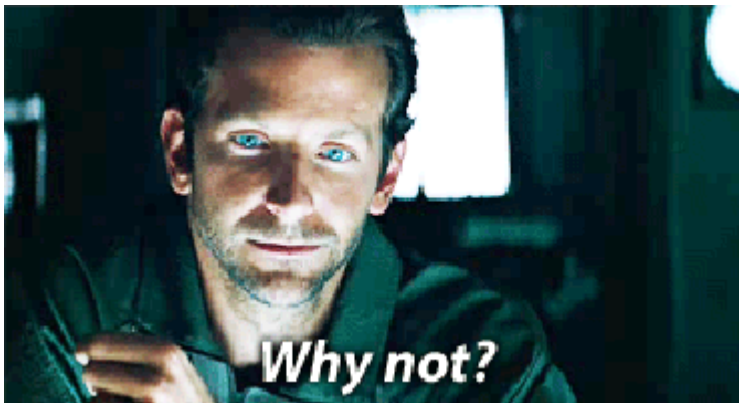
All Slacked Out - Long Live Email

There is always a fight for the industry to come up with a “better mouse trap”. Quite often, there is good reason for this. The real question when we try to do something like design a better mouse trap, should be “do we really have a mouse problem?”

Here’s my Slack journey.

Step 1 - Everyone talks about Slack. I try Slack.

We’ve been inundated with the conversations that start with “Hey, are you on Slack yet?” and the plethora of emails with invites from all of our communities that we participate in. As the promised “email killer”, Slack seems like it could be a worthy replacement for the IM world, combined with the ability to share information like some file sharing products do. By sharing better in real time and with persistent chat, this could really unseat the need for email, right?



Step 2 - Day 1 - So much chat goodness!!

It’s like having DMs, but with the world! Every sub-group of folks that I do things with are on Slack, so I’m on 7 different Slack teams, each with two channels: #random and #general



I’m a little worried about the fact that everything is in these two unorganized channels, but that’s the beauty of Slack, right? Everyone says that we should segment it to make it better, but not a single one of the Slack teams have done so yet. I’m sure that they will, right?

Slack is interesting because it’s got the randomness and immediacy of Twitter, the reach of IM, and the promise of eliminating the need for email. I can’t wait to make this work!

Step 3 - It's a little overwhelming

Well, I still have email. I still have Skype, which I also use for voice and video calls every day. I still have SMS and Twitter, both of which are primary contact methods for many people. FaceTime for free calls is a clincher, so that's not going away. I'm sure that I can make Slack a primary use product. After all, it's promised to eliminate the need for email.

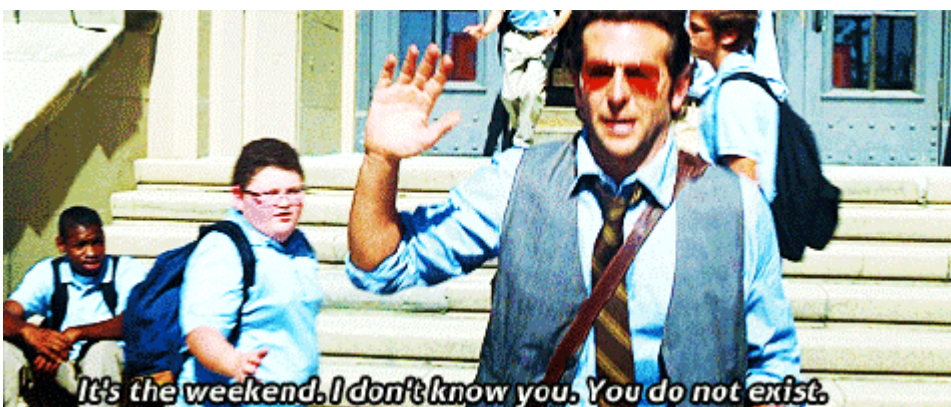


Step 4 - Always on. ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS on

The email killer is now taking up most of the day tracking notifications. The conversation counter is ticking up constantly. There is quite a bit of chatter on here, so more chat should mean more value, right? The issue is that it has become so noisy that I have already started to just reset the notifications and scroll to the bottom without reading the content.

Email has the ability to be closed out. I've specifically set my email regimen to be only open during certain hours of the day, and I check occasionally just to make sure that nothing urgent comes up. Skype and SMS are the primary source of "Hey, I need something pretty urgently..." type of content.

At this point in the Slack journey, I've already stopped using the client after hours and on weekends because it has become very noisy.



Step 5 - Slack Jumps the Shark for me

It doesn't take too long before I hit the wall. I've tried using Slack in my daily routine on 3 different occasions. Each time I give it a try over a few weeks. Each time it results in the same sensation. I want out.



Step 6 - Freedom from Slack

I still have Slack. Notifications are turned off altogether. I log in every once in a while just to scroll through the conversations. What's interesting is that I'm not the only one. Most of the Slack teams I'm on have reduced the usage to near zero. Email is a very different medium for sharing information. IM, Skype, SMS, FaceTime, and other products have such a deep integration to day-to-day interaction with many people that it has become a mainstay.

The moment that I accept that Slack just isn't working, I immediately feel relieved.



Slack is great, but not for me. If you're connecting Slack to development workflows and lots of micro-team collaborative work, I applaud you and the product. I think I could have made it work with a few adjustments:

- Organize the channels and content appropriately
- Integrate with other systems to enhance the workflow
- Find the teams that can use it well, and will also shed other medium to fully embrace it

Slack didn't replace email. It never will. Hoping that you can find more from it than I did.

